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AN ACCOUNT OF THE LANDS OF  
METLALTOYUCA, PRESENTED  
TO THE MINISTER OF FOMENTO,  
BY THE COMMISSION OF  
EXPLORATION, IN CHARGE OF  
ENG. RAMON ALMORAZ

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Translation of Document #10, from "memoriadel Ministerio de Fomento. 1865.

An account of the Lands of Metlaltoyuca, presented to the Minister of Fomento, by the Commission of Exploration, in charge of Eng. Ramon Almoraz

In compliance with my orders for the Commission directed by me, dated July 15, 1865, I set out with the engineers, Don Antonio Garcia y Cubas and William Hay for Huauchinango. The work of the Com. included the following tasks; to study the road from Tulancingo to Tuxpan, touching at Huauchinango: arriving at this point to get in accord with the Sub Prefect of this District of the same name, Don Juan B. Campo, with the plan to examine the vacant lands which he mentions in his Report of last June: To make a rough draft of the lands, giving me the most important data with the idea of their situation and area, make a description of the topography and climate: of the productions and other circumstances of said lands; to learn if they can be dedicated with advantage to colonization.

When arriving at the point where there exist the ruins of an ancient civilization, of which Sr. Campo spoke extensively in his report, make minute descriptions and take views of them and the more notable objects that may be found there.

The generosity of Mr. Hay, who is named equally on the Commission kindly placed at my service his knowledge and photo equipment.

Knowing what we had to do I informed the Secretary that in my opinion the photo equipment was insufficient to carry out the work, considering that we were now in the wet season, the light might not be sufficient to take the views, and owing to the condition of the roads, some of the equipment might be broken and probably the ruins being in dense forest, the views taken would show the ruins of secondary value to the trees.

Hence I requested an artist who would dedicate himself to representation of the ruins: he agreeing with me placed at my disposal two from the National Academy of San Carlos, Sr. Velasco and Sr. Coto.

~~Then~~ the necessary instruments were provided by the National Scientific Commission. of the Valley of Mexico.

I selected a small Troughton & Sims transit and a compass of the same make, a Rochon telescope, a thermometer and a metric tape. I was short an instrument for determining the altitude above sea level although the Com. had a good GayLussac, I decided not to take it, its construction being too delicate for our purpose.

However Mr. Hay offered me his aneroid, which I accepted, though I had little confidence in that type of instrument, but I tested it in San Juan Teotihuacan and in Tulancingo with other barometers and it seemed to be correct and suitable for our purpose.

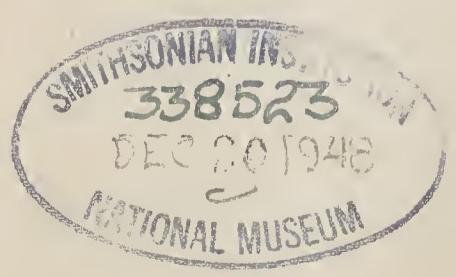
Having assembled our equipment we set out on the 18th of July, 3 days after receiving our commission.

I should state here that the season was far from the best for our venture, being in the wet season. Those who know the condition of the roads <sup>know that</sup> at this time, the roads are very slippery, and the rivers and small streams are suddenly flooded and that you go from one precipice to another.

The streams carrying all sorts of debris which prevents using a raft for passing cargoes without getting them soaked.

In Tulancingo and Huauchinango various persons advised us to abandon the trip until later in the season.

We listened to them but decided to proceed and with time and persistence reached our destination.



We had to lose some time till the floods diminished or methods were found to pass the streams and in this way at the end of three days arrived at the mesa of Etlaltoyucá where we found the ruins described by the Sr. ~~Subprefecto~~.

On our arrival we divided the work to be done as follows; Mr Hay taking ~~the~~ the archeological part and taking the photographs, the artists being at his disposal: Sr. Garcias Cubas to make the plan of the ruins and I to attend to the geographic and the study of the road and the vacant lands.

In the report to the Commission herewith appended, I have the honor to manifest the results obtained.

Mexico, August 30, 1965-The Chief of the Scientific Commission of the Valley of Mexico. Ramon Almaraz.

#### GEOGRAPHIC SECTION.

Omitting information on the road from Mexico City to Tulancingo, which is well known, and our orders confine <sup>us</sup> to the part from Tulancingo beyond.

There are two roads from Tulancingo to Huauchinango: one passing the Ranch of Tenango, and the other the village of Acazuchitlan, both bad for vehicles.

The first of about 43 kil. and the second about 49. Both unite at the bridge of Totolapa about 8 kil. above Huauchinango.

According to information given us the, the second though longer is the best so we decided to take the second. To go to Huauchinango by this route you take a N.E. direction, about 16 kil. over flat lands forming the beautiful valley of Tulancingo, and on the way pass the Ranch of Napatec and the village of Santa Ana, also the villages of San Pedro and Asuncion where the plain ends and the mountains begin.

It begins here with a gentle rise, the difference in altitude between the plain and the highest point of the mountain is ~~is~~ 95 meters (309 ft.)

The grades are gentle and easy climbing. Somewhat farther down is located the village of Acazuchitlan, which translated means, flower of the carrizo, a reed grass. This village is 8 kil. from the beginning of the ~~ppaxixox~~ mountains. Proceeding in the same direction, the land being nearly level, passing a number of small ravines, we arrived at a small plateau called Chacapalapa, which is limited by the river Totolapa, already mentioned

At the river of Totolapa we found a stone bridge of two arches which is still unfinished and deteriorating. The approaches are not complete or the gangway. The approaches are short but steep. The distance from Acazuchitlan is 17 kil. Beyond the bridge rises another plateau called the Venta, and 2 kil. farther the Ranch of Galindo, point from which begins the descent to Huauchinango. This descent is heavy for carts, having a grade of 8 to 10 degrees, but considered as a saddle trail is good, being paved, though parts are in bad repair and others treacherous.

In Huauchinango, the name, I was told being derived from Hohuachitnamil, signifying, a house of corn stalks, and according to others cuauhtchinamil, meaning wood for arrows, ends the road for carts and beyond is only a saddle trail and pack animals. The road extends in the same general direction ~~south~~



as previously mentioned with a downward incline for 8 k.. In all this distance only one ravine has to be crossed, is there a steep descent to the Necaxa river, which though considered a saddle trail, is difficult although paved.

Next we cross the Necaxa river which is the same as we crossed at the Totolapa bridge. There is a sort of a bridge over the Necaxa river, but owing to its being constructed of vines, having a high arch, narrow footway, and, only used by travelers on foot. Horses and pack animals having to ford or swim. The bridge from its fragile construction oscillates strongly when being used. Our artist presents a sketch showing its original construction. Passing the river there is another climb like the descent. The village of Necaxa is on the margin of the river, about 8 k. from Huauchinango. Necaxa means "noise in the water". Passing the river, and reaching the top you arrive at a small plateau, on which are some fortifications constructed during the last years of the recent war. The point in our estimation was well chosen, there still exist the trenches, covered roads and shelters used by the troops. All the eastern and southern parts are protected by the Necaxa river steep precipices and at this point is the famous fall of Huauchinango or Necaxa as it is also called, which has ~~not~~ been so well described by the pen of the Count of Cortina; I will proceed.

I will state however that the water falls according to Sr Cabrioto 134.9 meters. I tried to check this by timing the time it required for a part of the stream to make the descent to be about seven seconds, which would give a depth of about 239 meters. There is another cascade above this but, owing to the difficult terrain, we could not reach the point.

It is called the Ventana (window). The first fall is also called Tres Chorros, (three streams) from the fact that in flood time there are three divisions in the stream as it goes over the cliff.

The grades here are so steep as to make it very difficult for infantry.

Continuing on the road we leave the Mesa on the right, passing through a narrow place and proceed on about a level, in a long curve to the right, skirting a high mountain. From a point on this road one discovers a beautiful view of the Falls, of which we also made a sketch.

A short distance beyond we arrive at a place called Dos Caminos (two roads). As the name indicates; one passing Xicotepec, the other proceeding to Tuxpan, passing the Ranch of San Marcos, which is located on the margin of the river of the same name, also as the Jalapilla, but in the state of Vera Cruz where it enters the Gulf in it known as the Casones.

We followed the road to Xicotepec, which from the junction is almost flat, only passing two or three small streams, and to pass them only small declines and climbs are necessary.

Xicotepec they say is derived from a word meaning tired mountain, but others say the word is an adulterant and should be Itzintlaltepec, meaning "at the foot of the mountain, in fact Xico is situated on a small plateau, surrounded by mountains. From Xico there are also two roads, the first in a NW direction called the river road, and the other NE and called the mountain road. In the dry season the first is preferred as it is more level, but in the wet season it is impossible for travel, as the river has to be crossed 23 times, and is usually flooded, for this reason we took the mountain road.



Leaving Xico the road is good, and nearly level, for about 4 kil. skirting the mountain Natanca, but from there to Jalapilla it is very bad at this season, the grades in many places being steep, the soil being a sticky and slippery clay, and many places are found, where deep holes are caused by all the animals stepping in the same places, and each making them a bit deeper until they become knee deep. In other places there are inclined strata of rock of 20 to 25 degrees and it is more dangerous if the animals are shod.

Don't believe we are exaggerating the condition of these roads, it is sufficient to say that Sr Almaraz who has visited a large part of the high mountain roads says, that "these take first place for bad roads."

The distance from Xico to Jalapilla is 22 kil..

L Jallapilla, meaning "sand in the water," is a small village situated about 500 meters from the river, on the right side, from which it takes its name. We passed this river by means of an arrangement they called a swing. It consists of a rope, each end of which is attached to a tree, one each bank, and on this rope a block travels from side to side, pulled by another rope. also there is a loop hanging from the block in which the person crossing sits. we made a sketch of it which we include here with. The owners believe it to be safe but, but we were doubtful. The main rope, which carries the block is about 60 meters long and only 3 centimeters thick.

Then the pulley, supposed to be a perfect circle is more like a polygon and the channel for the rope is very uneven causing undue wear on the rope. Passing the Jallapilla river there is a climb of about 3 kil. passing the village of San Pedro Petlacotla, which means "tight rocks in the road". Here the road is very bad, but with the advantage that it is not sticky, rocks predominating.

Finishing this climb, which is known as that of San Pedro, we come to a level stretch for a short distance and then begin the decline on the north side of the hill. This descent is called the "Pimentilla", at the end of which we are in the valley of the Panhuatlan stream, which we ford three times.

It is narrow and the deepest part which we passed was not more than one meter in depth, and the water has a low velocity. The length of this flat is about 4 kil. bringing us to the Tuxpan (Pantepec) river.

On the margining where the pass is located there are a few huts, this village being known as Paso Real (Royal Pass). From the pass begins a stiff climb of about 4 kil., the road being mostly a sticky clay.

The river here is about 150 meters wide. Here we passed ourselves and equipment in a boat and swam the horses across, the river at the time being too deep to ford.

Finishing this climb we find ourselves in the village of Pantepec, meaning "on the mountain", and it is near the highest point. The descent from Pantepec is about 9 kil., and almost as bad as the ascent, passing which you can say you have finished with the mountains and arrived in the Huasteca.

We now proceed on flat land and cross a small stream known as the Colotla, 9 times. Its width and depth are about the same as the Panhuatlan. In this distance of about 10 kil we again cross the Pantepec river, at a place called Los Naranjos, (the oranges), so called from the abundance of wild oranges and limes in the vicinity.

Here we again passed the river in a boat, recently brought here for the purpose, the animals swimming across.

The river here is a little more than 150 meters wide. Passing the river the road continues on a plane for about 8 k.; passing a deep small stream called "Sali se Puedes" (get out if you can) which is well named as it is narrow and steep banks of slippery clay, and the animals frequently fall and



with pack or rider.

After crossing the Salisepuedes, there is still a level part and then a moderate grade coming to the top of the Mesa de Metlaltoyucá, near where the ancient ruins are to be found.

Later we will treat of the Mesa, stating that we are adding a map of the road and the lands which we came to study, also a vertical cross section of the road, from which a better idea of the variations in elevations of the ~~maximas~~ country passed over may be seen.

#### ANIMAL and VEGETABLE KINGDOMS.

To make a thorough study of these branches, it is necessary for a person to have special training in these sciences, to pass a great deal of time in the locality. The vegetation of the mountain being rich and varied, which applies equally to the animal kingdom.

Considering the little than has been done along these lines in this country, it is easy to believe that many new species may be found in both.

Before leaving the City we had arranged with the ministry, that a naturalist from the Scientific Commission of the Valley should accompany us, who might have added an article on the subject, who though not having made a formal study of the material at hand, but whose knowledge and his practice would be a great help in producing said article.

Unfortunately, este Sr. Don Manuel Villada, who promised to go with us was suddenly taken ill, and could not take the journey.

In order not to leave a vacancy we will attempt give some ideas.

On leaving the valley of Tulancingo and entering the mountains the vegetation begins to become more and more luxuriant, until we reach the climax of the tropics, but along the coast it begins to degenerate again. Crossing the upper plateau we only saw pines, soft and hard, and oaks with beautiful foliage.

Near Acazuchitlan maguey is cultivated and here it reaches large sizes; in the village we saw many apples and beyond blackthorn.

In Huauchinango the vegetation is much more luxuriant, the woods are different varieties of timber and in the town there are so many varieties of fruit and flowers it would be difficult to mention them. You find the liquidamber, called ocotzotle, and beautiful oranges hide the houses. The Chinese cabbage reaches colossal sizes and what drew my attention most was the corn, which attained the height of 4 to 5 meters and had not yet reached maturity.

From La Venta to Xico you find coffee, mangos and in the woods the giant fern, noted for its durability and the high color of its fibres.

Going on down you find bananas, sugar cane, tobacco, cotton, rice and the fruit trees of the tropics.

McC. Sean G. Coff 29 Oct 19



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